

“See and Be Seen” Art Show Highlights Consumer Artwork



See and Be Seen is a group art exhibition exploring mental health awareness, wellness and resilience currently running until May 20, 2014, at the Bleicher/Golightly/Gorman Gallery in Santa Monica. Sponsored by Cal MHSA and LACDMH, the Arts Network Artist in Residency Program has worked with South Bay Mental Health clients since January 2014, and is facilitated by Arts Network educators Joella March, Mannig Gurekian, Maria Elena Cruz and Toni Ivashkov.

The focus of the gallery show is the individual masks clients made of their own faces. Throughout history and cultures, masks have always been objects of power and art. Masks can conceal or reveal, empower or insight and threaten or soothe. In the mask-making workshop, masks were created as self-portraiture. Each participant had their face cast in plaster gauze as a foundation to express their unique story of hope, wellness and resilience through text, poetry and art.

While viewing the artwork, visitors are invited to take a photo in the interactive photo booth with a multi-fabric backdrop and empty picture frames. Anyone can choose to “be seen” by *taking part* in a “photo-op” as part of this ongoing participatory photographic installation.

See and Be Seen has provided the clients of the South Bay Mental Health Center with a public platform to present themselves in a creative and empowering way. Their diligence, and the honest self-expression that their artwork evokes, has transformed the gallery into a colorful, vibrant, engaging, articulate and heartfelt invitation to openly “see themselves” and to “be seen” by their community friends and family.



Each Mind Matters lime green materials are available to all visitors (i.e. ribbons, resource cards, stickers, etc.) and extend the conversation about mental health awareness, resources and advocacy into the community.

Mannig, Joella, Maria and Toni offered an inspiring series of hands-on art workshops in mixed media including: painting, drawing, sculpture techniques, collage, watercolor, functional art, self-portraiture, artist book making, music meets art, mask making and text in art. Guest Poet educator A.K Toney (poetry books) and guest musician educators Miranda Rondeau (music meets art) also facilitated. Participants developed skills from these workshops enabling them to produce the dynamic work in the exhibition.

The *Art of Daybreak* Multi-Arts Outreach Program is an innovative arts outreach program dedicated and designed to meet the specific needs and reveal the creative potential of men, women and young adults with mental health challenges. Our mission is to enrich lives, eliminate stigma and encourage hope and goals, while increasing wellness and recovery through hands on involvement and exposure to all the arts. Through the process of creativity our program provides the opportunity to gain self-esteem, experience joy, and a sense of empowerment through self-expression and a positive access to the imagination. Art educators facilitate hands-on workshops in fine art, creative writing, theater improvisation, music and dance to persons served at mental health centers, wellness centers, board and care facilities and homeless shelters throughout Los Angeles and surrounding counties.



The Arts Network promotes mental health wellness, recovery and stigma elimination through arts programming and community outreach. For more information, visit www.namicalifornia.org

This project was funded through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop.63).